



**Australian
Human Rights
Commission**

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Sex Discrimination
Commissioner and
Commissioner Responsible
for Age Discrimination



Friday, 9 July 2010

Promoting Fair, Flexible, Family-Friendly Workplaces

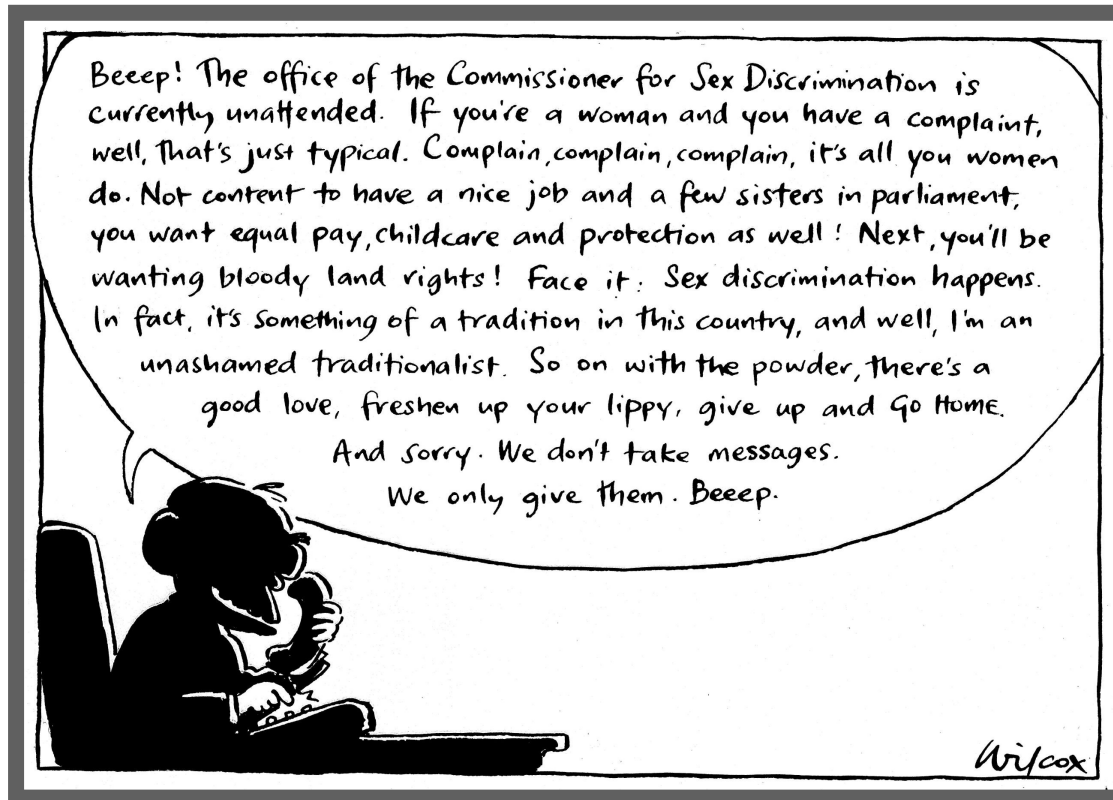
11th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference
Melbourne Convention Centre



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What no Sex Discrimination Commissioner?





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Agenda

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- Progress particularly the recent legislative reform
- Attitudinal and cultural barriers
- What else to be done – panel discussion



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Legislative reform



- Paid Parental Leave
- *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)*
 - Right to request flexible working arrangements (National Employment Standards)
 - Adverse action
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*
 - Family responsibilities provisions broadened to include indirect discrimination in all areas of employment



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Myths



- Workplace flexibility is a soft human resources issue
- Paid work and family issues are a concern of women only
- Part-time workers are not committed
- Only certain jobs can be done part-time – not managerial or supervisory
- Part-time work is the panacea



Part-time work: the solution?



- One-and-a-half-earner household (father full-time; mother part-time):
 - Represents 45.8% of Australian households
 - Represents less than 25% in Denmark, Italy, France and the USA*
- Women accounted for 72% of part-time workers in 2005[^]
- In 2009, 58% of women working part-time reported time pressure, compared to 27.9% of men^{**}

*Lyn Craig, Michael Bittman, Jude Brown & Denise Thompson, *Managing Work and Family* (Social Policy Research Centre Report, May 2008)

[^]ABS, *Measures of Australia's Progress* (2009)

^{**}Barbara Pocock, Natalie Skinner & Reina Ichii, *Work, Life and Workplace Flexibility: The Australian Work and Life Index* (University of South Australia, 2009)



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Unpaid caring work



Women will avoid adverse outcomes for their children and employers at a potential cost to themselves.

Is this the work/life balance we're trying to achieve?



Where is the solution?

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- Paid work and care is not an individual and private choice
- We must confront attitudinal barriers and deeply held prejudices
- Balancing paid work and family is about the value of time



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Panel discussion: Job redesign

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Flexibility is not being embraced as a business opportunity

Job redesign is at the heart of true flexible work practice



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Panel discussion: Encouraging men



Encouraging men as carers is critical if we are to shift cultural barriers and attitudes to men's involvement with family and caring responsibilities